2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

hands and mutter an incantation, when the metal would slowly rise to the top and float there. When sceptics were present, this man would suddenly stop the charm he was uttering, and the bits of metal would either remain floating in the middle of the bowl of water or sink down again, according to the part of the spell to which he had reached. How it was done is only known to wizards of his class and sleight-of-hand people perhaps, but to the actual fact of this khôntet letpwè, as it is called, numbers of people, Europeans as well as Burmans, can testify. The conjurer is a well-known man near the village of Pantanaw, fifty miles or so west of Rangoon.

But however many miracles the than wéza may work, he is always exceeded in reputation by the constructor of cabalistic squares and symbols. These are in constant use by every Burman, or rather he gets them made and interpreted for him by a proficient. The horoscope which every one has drawn up at his birth has numbers of these mystical numbers on it, from which lucky days and dangerous combinations may be learnt. To calculate the more harmful spells the in sayā should have these data, or at any rate should know the date and hour of the victim's birth. Therefore it is a safe rule never to let a wizard or conjurer see your sadā, or to mention the hour of your birth to any one whom you may suspect of having an ill-will against you, for he might from even that one fact have a most potent charm thrown over you. These mystic squares and numbers have most extraordinary virtue. By holding up one of a particular kind for a short time you can set a house on fire. Another in engraved on a stone will make it float, and such a stone, buried in the skin of a man's body, would prevent him from drowning, unless some other magician destroyed its influence by a more potent spell. If you scratch an in on a tree or a house, you can make lightning strike it; another arrangement of the cabalistic words or numbers will preserve it from such a calamity. There is probably not a single Burman, tattooed at all, who has not several ins on different parts of his body. Some of them protect from special ailments; the most common are those which avert dangers from bullet or hand-cut.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

418. SUNLAUNG AT THADINDYUT FESTIVAL.

and, in order to possess its proper value, should be completed in a day and a night. This is the only approach to a vigil. The texture is loose, and broad bands of tinsel are shot through to make up the woof faster.

Tawthalin is a minor festival, falling in Lent, and observed only in Pegu. The *Tawthalin* offerings are distinguished by being in thousands, one thousand little cakes, one thousand plantains, and so on (No. 282). The number one thousand is said to be symbolical of the thousand *gâta* or stanzas of the *Wêthandayâ zat*, the legend of Gawdama Buddha's last incarnation but one, closely prefiguring the final incarnation.

The above are the Buddhist festivals, which are celebrated by the whole population together, with all the *éclat* they can give them. The only other recurring observances of a religious character have nothing to do with Buddhism, and are rejected by all earnest and enlightened Buddhists. These observances, if not furtively conducted, as is often the case, are kept by individuals only, or by households at a time; they have sufficient in common with the *nat* worship of the hill tribes, to show what the original Burman and Taláing worship may have been. Unlike the Karén, who knows only of evil *nats*, the Burman has both good and evil spirits. The former belong to the land of the *zat* romance, the latter are chiefly the survival of the primitive paganism. In the Burman cosmogony, *nat-yua* is the delectable land to which, by a courtesy analogous to the German "*hoch-*" and "*höchstselig*," the kings are said to migrate at their demise. A higher order than *nat* is *thadyâ* and *thadyâ-min*, and above these the highest order of being, *byamma*, the cloud-

419. FIRE-BALLOONS AT THADINDYUT.

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

888 To the Burmese, long life is a great blessing and an indication of merit earned. Long life is prayed for and old age greatly idealized.

The ideal aged person is one who has successfully reared a family, has grandchildren and a certain amount of material wealth. The aged are expected to be 887 retiring and unobtrusive in their behavior. They do not go out visiting very much; they eat less food; and avoid appearing too well dressed or jeweled when attending religious observances.

An attitude of resignation characterizes the outlook of the aged person in Burmese society. It is unheard of that aged people should work: a possible ex- [622] ception is the village headman, who, it is felt, should be a person of long experience. When aged people live with their children they assume the role of teachers of their grandchildren. Most of the time of elderly people is spent in activities centering around the pagodas and monasteries, organizing of religious festivals, and raising funds for the monks and charities. In fact, they take leading roles in such activities.

The elderly members of the household arise early to see that rice is cooked for the daily offering to the monks and to insure that the household altar is properly looked after. It is preferable for them to arise before dawn, for to do so is considered very meritorious.

[784] Certain of the taboos that apply to younger people, mostly those connected with death, do not apply to the aged.

761 *Death and Funeral Observances.* To the Burmese, the decline of the human body is part of the inevitable course of nature. When this occurs the soul must [775] leave. The butterfly is the symbol of life: when a person dies, "the butterfly leaves his body."

763 When death approaches, valuables, such as jewelry, are removed from the person and the death-bed, because people are reluctant to use anything with which a person dies. These things are given to the monastery. A relative chants as the person is dying, to fix his mind upon the truths of Buddhism and to divert it from worldly goods and ties of kinship.

764 As soon as death has occurred, everyone present cries and wails. Before rigor mortis sets in, relatives bathe the corpse, using a new water pot for the purpose and pouring the water over the body from foot to head, the opposite direction from that practiced by the living. If the water pot must be refilled at all, this [801] must be done an odd number of times. The pot is then put outside the house, upside down, and anyone outside the family of the deceased may take it. Then